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SUMMARY OF NATIONAL PAPER*

The national paper:

- aims at indicating the main goals and objectives of government policy in the areas of interest, namely: (a) Science and technology for development; (b) Agriculture; (c) Fisheries; (d) Industrialization; (e) Energy; and (f) Health and environment;

- aims at identifying problems encountered in the application of science and technology towards solving socio-economic problems in these areas of interest and indicating the steps necessary to solve these problems; and

- indicates how regional co-operation can contribute towards a solution of some of the more pressing socio-economic problems in the region.

Introduction

Some of the political, economic and social objectives of Malta's international and national policies are mentioned together with some of the obstacles that will have to be overcome in order to achieve these objectives, namely the lack of natural resources and an inadequate number of specialized personnel in many of the more advanced scientific and technological fields. On the credit side, Malta possesses a good climate, has relatively no pollution problems, possesses a large amount of skilled manpower, particularly in the trades, and a tertiary education system that provides general basic scientific and technological training.

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* The designations employed, the presentation of material and the views expressed in this paper are those of the Government of Malta and do not necessarily reflect the practices and views of the Secretariat of the United Nations in any of these respects.

Science and technology for development

Research and development in science and technology is necessarily limited by the comparative shortage of specialists, inadequate financial resources and a greater need for adaptive and applied research than for purely fundamental work. Malta will, therefore, have to continue to depend on basic research performed in overseas institutions for updating its technology and will have to concentrate on applying research results obtained elsewhere.

Agriculture

Government policy in agriculture is to reduce dependence on imports, meet demand and eventually increase exports of agricultural produce through application of science and technology. The main obstacles encountered in applying science and technology to agricultural development are the lack of technical manpower to study application, inadequate access to scientific and technology information, and the educational status of labour on the average farm. Plans to overcome these obstacles include strengthening of the scientific and technological infrastructure, improving the information acquisition system, and training of farmers.

Fisheries

The annual catch, though improving annually, is still considerably too low. Government policy has as its main objective the meeting of local demand for fish and shellfish to the greatest possible extent from local sources. These objectives can be achieved through the application of science and technology especially in the field of aquaculture, fish and shellfish farming, etc.

Industrialization

Malta's efforts over the past few years to change its economy from one based on revenue from military bases to one based on revenue from tourism, and the servicing and manufacturing industries, are outlined. Some of the more important difficulties Malta has encountered in its attempts to acquire foreign technology are also mentioned - for example, the prohibitive cost of expert assistance and equipment, obsolescence or incompatibility of machinery, unfavourable conditions for the transfer of technology, etc.

Energy

The Government aims at reducing dependence on oil by encouraging a greater utilization of alternative sources of energy. A Mediterranean centre devoted to the practical development and application of wind and solar energy for the benefit of, and to provide services to, the countries in the Mediterranean region should be set up in Malta.

Health and environment

It is recognized that science and technology has an important role to play in the further development of public health and environmental protection. Financial problems and the lack of adequately-trained personnel and educational facilities are the main problems that need to be solved.

General economic policy

Government economic policy is one of a mixed economy based on local and/or foreign and/or government investments in various manufacturing and servicing industry sectors, such as: maintenance and servicing of aircraft, ships, heavy machinery, oil rigs and heavy electrical equipment; trans-shipment, warehousing, bunkering and processing of goods from distant countries on their way to European and African markets; metal manufacturing and engineering; electrical engineering; chemicals; pharmaceuticals; rubber and leather products; shipbuilding; electronics and optics.

General recommendations

Recommendations on the identification of suppliers of technology and partners, on reducing the price paid for the transfer of technology, on acquisition of experts and on international co-operation between developing nations in the acquisition of technology are included for consideration by the European Regional Meeting.